THE CATALOGUER'S WALL OF SHAME

"Does my Wall of Shame grow because libraries don't care about their future?"

I'm a cataloguer and I believe the biggest issue facing my profession is apathy.

I see hundreds of records a week, and have done since graduating from library school two years ago. Some days I don't find many records in *Libraries Australia* and *WorldCat* to add to the Cataloguing Wall of Shame I maintain, because the items that pass through my hands have been competently catalogued by others. Other days, record after record is added to the Wall, because whoever created the records, and/or modified them, either didn't care about cataloguing rules and standards, or didn't know about these things in the first place. And I'm not talking about (mere) typos or MARC coding errors here. I'm talking about serious breaches in authority control and controlled vocabulary.

I know authority control and controlled vocabulary are not necessarily matters of deep importance to many library professionals but, believe me, they should be. Because if we ignore authority control and controlled vocabulary, what can we offer the world that any full-text database doesn't? Nothing. If you visit any of the many cataloguing blogs or listservs, you can see that we cataloguers enjoy healthy debates on many aspects of our work. Few cataloguers debate the critical role of authority control in the future of information management. Even fewer non-cataloguers debate the importance of authority control. So why does my Wall of Shame grow?

Does my Wall of Shame grow because libraries don't care about their future? Does it grow because it's cheaper to not care whether their cataloguers do the most important thing? Does it grow because we cataloguers don't speak up when our colleagues take the easy way out? No matter the reason, nothing seems to be done about it and I've had enough. I know I'm only a baby cataloguer, and probably idealistic, but if libraries continue to do nothing about the quality of the records they pay for, and my colleagues continue to allow shonky authority work, I don't think any of us will be able to take pride in being librarians.
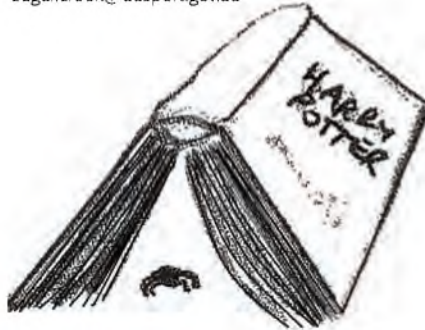
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WHAT TO DO WITH ALL THOSE BOOKS?

Now that libraries are embracing e-resources, e-books or e-reference, one of the biggest issues facing the profession today is how we manage an orderly disposal regime for the large holdings of paper books remaining in Australian libraries. Libraries have invested heavily in providing electronic resources for their users, and consequently a decline in the usefulness and usage of paper books is apparent. Libraries are also seeking to better utilize library space for their physical users, by creating hubs for Internet/computer use, relaxation and food spaces, shared study facilities, meeting and teaching rooms, server rooms etc. Large runs of shelving without users, particularly in the now defunct reference collections, take up space that is no longer justified.

Books have always been weeded in the normal course of business, however many academic libraries are now weeding up to 80% of their paper holdings. Some libraries are putting books into storage which is costly (both environmentally and financially) in the long term, while others are destroying or selling them. The used book market is saturated and there is little or nothing to be gained by selling off the vast majority of holdings – most of which are not rare and are held by numerous libraries. Destruction via recycling may be environmentally sound, re-use however is surely the best option. Herewith then, in an attempt to promote any possible usage in the current information world for paper-based books, are a few considered suggestions for intense weeders.
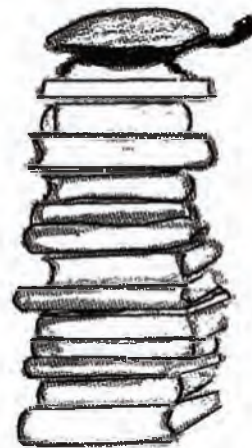
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Emergency housing for spiders
Note this is not a fully weather-proof solution and all emergency shelters should be constructed indoors.

Towers for turtles
This solution makes every turtle a potential king like Yertle and removes the difficulties of having to amass a large number of turtles into a pile.

Platforms for seals
This option is not designed for the purposes of a seal performance act as books are inherently unstable as a platform. The suggested use for this option is to assist seals to see over low walls.

This little break from the solemnity of the big issues wins Edgar our inaugural 'Make The Editor Laugh' award – Ed.